

NOV 26 1954

Captured in 1952:

Mystery Shrouds 2 Yanks Seized by Reds as Spies

FOIAb3b

By KEYES BEECH

N.Y. Journal-American and
Chicago Daily News Foreign Service

CPYRGHT

Official Sources Keep Silence

On Mission of Alleged Agents

TOKYO, Nov. 26.—A chain of unanswered questions today guarded the secret of two American civilians condemned to prison by Red China as spies.

Radio Peiping on Tuesday identified Richard George Fecteau, 27, and John Thomas Downey, 24, as two of the 13 Americans convicted of espionage.

The only thing certain about their cases was that somebody was lying.

The Red radio said both men were Central Intelligence agents captured when their twin-engine transport was shot down over Manchuria on Nov. 29, 1952.

ON BOARD PLANE.

Far East Air Force headquarters said Fecteau and Downey were passengers on the C-47 that mysteriously disappeared on a routine flight from Korea to Japan on Dec. 3. They were identified only as "Department of the Army civilians."

The plane was owned by Civil Air Transport, Inc. and under contract to the Air Force. At the time it disappeared FEAR did not issue the customary release but CAT did.

The Air Force says now that Fecteau and Downey were on the manifest when the plane left Seoul airport for Mito, Japan at 1 a.m., Dec. 3.

FOUR-HOUR FLIGHT.

For a C-49 this is normally a four-hour flight. According to the Air Force, the plane crossed the Korean Peninsula and was about 60 miles off the Korean coast when last contacted by radar.

This account leaves these questions among others unanswered:

—If the plane was en route to Japan when it disappeared how did Fecteau and Downey fall into Communist hands? The theory that the plane crashed at sea and the two men were picked up by the Communists doesn't hold water. If the Air Force account is correct the plane was in friendly territory. Nor could the two men have lived long enough in the icy water to drift into Communist territory.

Why weren't Fecteau and Downey listed as missing when the plane disappeared? CAT named only the pilot and copilot, Capt. Robert C. Snoddy, 31, Rosenberg, Ore., and Capt. Norman A. Schwartz, 30, Louisville, Ky. No passengers were mentioned.

Why hasn't there been an outcry from Downey's and Fecteau's friends or relatives over their fate? If, as the Communists charged, they were CI agents they could have been using assumed names.

Official sources did nothing to help answer any of these questions. Army spokesmen here said they had no record of either Fecteau or Downey but said that this meant nothing because their rosters listed only permanent employees.

The Communists charged that Fecteau and Downey were on a mission to contact a Chinese agent when their plane was downed. Observers recalled that CAT Airline, founded by Gen. Claire Chennault, a close friend of Chiang Kai-shek, was em-

ployed to supply National guerrillas formerly operating in northern Burma.

CI agents are numerous in this part of the world, and presumably they have contacts inside Red China. However, it is extremely unlikely that there are any white American agents in Chinese Communist territory.

CPYRGHT